



## MEETING MINUTES / 15 SEPTEMBER 2015

### ATTENDANCE:

Present: Sarg, Farley, Armbruster, Carroll, Hampton, Lardizzone, McMullen, Newman, Newstadt, Showell, Smith, and Weir **85.7%**

Excused Absences: Corsa (Medical), and Seppala (Organization event)

### CHAIRMAN'S OPENING REMARKS:

Thanked Commissioner Farley for homeless veteran work.

### MEETING MINUTES:

A motion was made and accepted to approve the previous meeting minutes with correction.

### ADMINISTRATIVE REMARKS:

#### VAMC- Ginny Yelland, Executive Assistant to Director:

September is Suicide Prevention Month and 260 persons attended the Mental Health Summit.

Initiatives: MyVA group was formed to create a relationship between medical, benefits, and National Cemetery Administration.

- (Sarg) Is it similar to Delaware Joining Forces (DJF)?

(Kirby) DJF is for service providers while MyVA Community is for cross talking.

(Kirby) Recommend adding one of two Cemetery Administrators to group to provide veteran cemetery input. The VA is working a Veteran Transportation System, funded for three years, with three 12-passenger vans and a staff to oversee program.

- (Sarg) Former Commissioner Morris has a transportation meeting on 30 September and the VA should consider attending.

- (Carroll) Will the program expand beyond the four days a week VA pick-up system?

Will find out following the program's initiation.

The solicitation process is finished and the VA will make a final decision on the new Georgetown CBOC.

- What is the status on the Georgetown psychiatric staffing?

No psychiatrist yet and treatment is rendered through telehealth.

#### Delaware Veterans Home (DVH) – Bill Peterson, Director:

131 residents with five more approved. VA published new per diem rates rising from \$102.63 to \$103.62.

Commissioner Carroll made a motion to use Donation Account funds to replace dining room sound system.

Motion was voted on and approved and \$20K will be used toward system improvement.

- (Carroll) How is the food service director transition going?

New director, Culinary Institute graduate, has started and the program is going well.

Surveyors provided recommendations and the home will resolve their concerns. Staffing is down three LPNs, one RN, and seven CNAs and will meet with VA Cabinet Secretary to discuss plan for filling slots. The issue, for nursing hires, is a \$10K gap in salaries with non-state positions. The state salary rate is outdated by possibly 25 years.

Bill 2460 (federal) which includes adult day care may be introduced to the house in November and it does not have Delaware legislative support (Congressman Carney awaiting additional information).

- (Newstadt) Is there overnight care with the adult day care program?

No it is not included.

**Home of the Brave, Director Jessica Finan:**

Will be meeting with board members to finalize housing construction plans. The home received a donated economy car for transporting veterans (saves fuel from van usage). Home has 15 males and 4 females.

- (Carroll) Can the home provide space for homeless male veterans with children?

No they are not equipped to handle males with children but refer them to other agencies.

- (Farley) This is a growing problem and they are cared for through social services.

**EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR'S COMMENTS:**

Learned from the state director's conference that some states place a "V" on driver's licenses to identify veterans. Will review Title 38 to possibly establish time in service limitations for DVTF applicants. Commissioner Newstadt expressed concern of eliminating veterans whose service was cut short due to medical issues.

Upcoming events: POW/MIA Chair of Honor Dedication Fri, 18 September; Operation Stand Down

Fri, 25 September; Trust Fund Social Fri, 25 September; Delaware Women's WWII Veterans Luncheon

Sat, 26 September; and Veterans Transportation Project Wed, 30 September.

Received a call requesting a metal wheelchair ramp, asked if anyone knows a source. Liz Jiron and Commissioner Weir said the American Legion may be a starting point.

**PUBLIC COMMENTS:****Sam Cannan, Watch Makers School**

Veterans Watchmaker Initiative (VWI) has privately funded the school and the Money family donated the land. The school has been approved for \$4.2M in construction costs. Richmond Group (watchmakers) has donated \$135K in state of the art equipment and \$100K in special benches (wheelchair accessible). The International Watch Jewelers Guild continues to provide show space to VWI to publicize the program. There will be a guaranteed 2400 repair jobs available monthly. Continuous meetings with watchmaker firms has resulted in continued support. The 10-week course curriculum will be submitted to the Department of Education for approval.

- (Newstadt) Is it better to be independent or related to government?

Being independent eliminates governmental micro-management and allows direct interaction with watchmakers.

The school needs electricians and plumbers so they received endorsement from multiple Middletown legislators supporting free (reduced) water and electric.

There are several requests for the commission:

- Can the commission formally recognize the Money family for their donation?

- Can the commission recognize the VFW post that donated \$50K in seed money?

- Seeking endorsement from actor R. Lee Ermey (Gunny Hartman / Full Medal Jacket)

- - possible letter from commission

- Working portable building and start up plan, request letter supporting school's business plan

**Patricia Cerchio, First State Military Women Warriors**

Fifteen female veterans are signed up for the Women's WWII Veteran Luncheon but encouraged the commission to continue advertising through service organizations.

**Liz Jiron, Operation Stand Down**

Ninety-three service organizations are signed up with a variety of offerings including dental examinations, haircuts, and clothing distribution. Governor Markell will be present to sign House Bill 88, veteran preference points for state jobs.

- Commissioner Smith presented Liz with a donation check from DelVets #1.

## **COMMITTEE REPORTS:**

### **Bear Veterans Memorial Cemetery, Commissioner Armbruster:**

Compliance inspection scheduled for 6 – 7 October.

### **Millsboro Veterans Memorial Cemetery, Commissioner Corsa:**

Not present.

### **Personnel, Director Kirby:**

No report

### **Health and Human Services, Commissioner Corsa**

Director Kirby reported DVTF data: August/September – 21 requested and 15 granted / 57.1% / awarded \$8,588.82 / balance \$71,612.71

### **Legislative Affairs, Commissioner McMullen**

Recommended considering what the commission wants to present in January.

- (Armbruster) Landlords throughout Delaware can refuse to accept housing vouchers, maybe legislation can be presented to prevent it from happening to veterans
- (Carroll) Maybe consider legislation to attract and retain DVH nursing staff

### **Finance and Logistics, Commissioner Newman**

No report.

### **Commemorative Affairs, Commissioner Showell**

Veterans Day bridge event is 11 November / 1030.

## **ORGANIZATIONAL REPORTS:**

Commissioner McMullen (AFSA)

Attended Professional Airmen Conference (National Conference) that featured various Veterans Affairs and U.S. Air Force leaders. Local chapter (Dover) received two awards. POW/MIA Dover AFB ceremony is 18 September / 1630.

Commissioner Armbruster (AL)

The national convention was attended by Secretary of Defense and the VA Secretary. Began oratorical program for local high school students.

Commissioner Weir (AMVETS)

Presented get well card to Commissioner Corsa. Provided comments during Seaford VFW 9/11 remembrance.

Commissioner Smith (Del Vets)

Flu shots will be administered at the Post #2 on 17 September.

Commissioner Lardizzone (DAV)

Picked up service vehicle and presented to the Wilmington VAMC. Is asking service organizations to participate in Veterans Day parade.

Commissioner Newstadt (JWV)

Attended DE National Guard anniversary, Wilmington VAMC homecoming, and Military Heritage Day (Fort Dupont).

Commissioner Farley (MCL)

Attended national conference which featured the HUD Secretary. Delaware's homeless veteran initiative is "tops" in the nation. Homeless 200 day celebration is scheduled for 18 September at Dover City Hall.

Chairman Sarg (MOAA)

Organization continues to lobby at the federal level and the organization's national president is retiring.

Commissioner Carroll (MOPH)

Departmental Commander Morris is spearheading the Department of Transportation's veteran transportation initiative.

Commissioner Seppala (MOWW)

Not present.

Commissioner Newman (VFW)

The state is offering suicide prevention assistance through the 211 program, but it is not a 24/7 operation.  
- (Farley) Recommended using the state's crisis line during non-available time.

Commissioner Corsa (VVA)

Not present.

Commissioner Showell (At Large)

Delaware Joining Forces meeting is scheduled for 17 September at the Smyrna Readiness Center.

Commissioner Hampton (At Large)

Attended the Dover AFB 9/11 retreat ceremony.

#### **UNFINISHED BUSINESS:**

**S.W. Asia / OIF-OEF Memorial Legislative Hall (OPEN)**

The dedication is scheduled for 7 November / 1200 following a parade.

**S.W. Asia / OIF-OEF Memorial Kent County Memorial Park (OPEN)**

The dedication is scheduled for 11 November / 1400.

**POW/MIA Chair of Honor at DCVA (OPEN)**

Director Kirby will engage Mr. Carter to obtain a chair and mimic the Legislative Hall program.

**Honor Flight Philadelphia, World War II Veterans Washington, DC trip (CLOSED)**

We did not hear back from event POC and will no longer pursue.

**Nomination Committee (CLOSED)**

Chairman Sarg and Vice Chairman Farley were successfully reappointed to their positions.

**Public University "Course Scheduling Preference" (OPEN)**

Commissioner Armbruster is awaiting additional information before pursuing.

#### **NEW BUSINESS:**

Director Kirby introduced a proposed partnership with the DE Historical Society to co-sponsor the "American Soldier" exhibit in Wilmington. He will meet with Public Archives and Department of State for funding recommendations as the exhibit cost is \$17K and the historical society is seeking financial assistance.

## **ITEMS FOR THE GOOD AND WELFARE OF THE ORGANIZATION**

Director Kirby discussed the need for diversity on the commission panel. He emphasized the need for female and recent era commissioners as opposed to ethnic / racial selections. The commission noted their service organizations do not have female / recent era members in leadership positions, thus it is difficult to nominate them as commissioners. Unless the service organizations increase their efforts to mimic current veteran makeup, the diversification will come solely from “at large” positions.

Commissioner Newstadt discussed the need for a change in the location / time of the commission meeting.

**NEXT MEETING:**                    **Tuesday, 20 October 2015 at 10:00 AM**

**LOCATION:**                        **802 Silver Lake Blvd, Suite 100, Dover, DE**